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**THE FOREIGN POLICY
OF THE LABOUR PARTY**

The Foreign Policy of The Labour Party

BY

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I
ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS
UNDER A BRITISH LABOUR
GOVERNMENT

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I

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS UNDER A BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT

I have been asked to give answers to four questions, the first of which is :— What, in my opinion, would be the relations between America and Great Britain under a Labour Government ?

The relations between Great Britain and America form a peculiarly delicate subject for discussion. There are unfortunately plenty of my countrymen who do not see this. Is not America an English-speaking nation ? Does it not belong to the community of Anglo-Saxon peoples ? Do not that fact and that mistake mean that, of course, America must be our ally in our world projects, and that it and we together have common tasks to perform in the history of mankind ? As a matter of fact,

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whilst nothing may be more desirable than such a companionship in well doing, it is not to be secured from "the mere elementary nature of things," but only by a patient process of understanding each other, of removing very serious difficulties and obstacles, of creating a mutual confidence which does not exist as yet ; and for this I am not at all sure that both countries will have to be driven together by dire world events as well as by whatever objects they may have in common.

A Labour Government would regard any aloofness on the part of America as a calamity, but it would go further than that. It considers its own world policy of pacification and reconstruction, of democratic development and freedom, as so essentially akin to the spirit and purposes of America, that America would find it hard to withhold what help it could give to us in our work.

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We know America's difficulties ; we respect America's suspicions. The American people are drawn from many diverse sources. They have crossed the Atlantic with many bitter memories in their hearts. Their thoughts of Europe and of ourselves have been anything but friendly, and they have no intention of allowing the mighty state which they have done their full share in building up to become an adjunct to any European power, or to get mixed up in the diplomatic confusions and nationalist ambitions of European policy. Who can blame them ? What is there in our records to entitle us to be superior judges or censors of their isolation ?

The British Labour Party, however, comes fresh and free into the field. Whatever mistakes it may make it may be its fate to make, it is not responsible for the past. Above all it sees quite clearly that for the future we need a new

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diplomatic method, a new courage for peace and justice, a new faith in national and personal freedom, a new energy in democracy. The memories which make America suspicious, the various racial grafts which make it vigorously determined to keep away from European entanglements, cannot regard a Labour Government in the same way as they would any other Government.

Should Labour come into office, it will inherit a past. It will not begin its work with the vanity of a child thinking it can begin all things from the beginning again. All impressions given to the contrary are but the partisan expedients devised by political opponents to stampede electors by fear. We shall take the world as we find it, and, in relation to what we consider its future ought to be, we shall devise our policy. America's remoteness in space has made it an onlooker and it has been anything but

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edified by what it has beheld. The ideas of democratic control and democratic aims to which the Labour Party has held steadfastly, and upon which it has built up what success it has won, enables it to see more plainly than other Parties, the American point of view, and, whilst living in the entanglements, it has been able to draw itself apart from them, see them with an American objectiveness, and propose remedies with the clearness of vision and freedom of a spectator. Thus it comes about that a Labour Government performing its task of disentangling the confusion of European politics to-day could not help receiving the sympathetic attention of the American people.

To think of an American alliance is both stupid and dangerous ; to dream of American goodwill and help is natural for any Government honestly and disinterestedly pursuing a policy which the

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best elements in America, east and west, must regard as good. That is the conviction of British Labour.

The main objective of a Labour Government would be to disestablish militarism not merely as an organisation, but as a trust, and to put an organisation of law, of conciliation and of equity in its place. It would also disestablish the old methods of diplomacy which on principle withheld information from the masses of the people, acted for them and committed them without consulting them. Diplomacy as we have known it has had a pronounced smack of the primitive man about it ; it has been a survival in our constitution as our atrophied eyelids have been a survival in our bodies ; it has been out of touch with modern political ways, and it is now a bar to the co-operation of democracies for peaceful and human ends.

America has always been willing to

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help Europe and to take its part in the general human progress. It has only asked for a guarantee that its help is to be effective, is not merely to aid European nations out of one mess so that they might prance into another, is not to mix up America in trouble rather than get other people out of it. The policy of a Labour Government will remove the hindrances to the co-operation of America, and, in so far as America can do so, its participation in solving the large moral political problems of the world will be made easy.

But, it is said, the trade and financial policy of a Labour Government will make co-operation with America impossible, and we are sometimes even told by a kind of Fascisti coterie that occasionally shows itself here that America would impose a blockade in food stuffs upon us by reason of some Bolshevik action which in their nightmares they

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see us undertaking. No party will fulfil its international obligations with more scrupulous care than the Labour Party. The responsible leaders of Labour, both on its industrial and its political sides, have shown again and again that to them an agreement is an agreement. Our Labour movement has never had the least inclination to try short cuts to the millenium ; if it had, the Russian example would have cured it. There is far more menace to the friendly relations between America and ourselves in a new Tariff Bill introduced in Washington, or a Tariff Reform agitation conducted here from Tory headquarters—certainly far more in the feeble handling by our Government of the disgraceful conduct of the liquor interest in conspiring to violate the law of America—than there would be in the domestic policy of a Labour Government ruling here in the interests of the mass of our people.

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One has only to sit in the House of Commons and observe the behaviour of the Labour Opposition and the Government benches respectively to see how a Government drawn from the latter would pursue a policy of consistent friendship and co-operation with the people of America.

Therefore, I answer the first question put to me by saying that an advent of a Labour Government ought greatly to improve the chances of America and ourselves co-operating (certainly not alone, for that does not enter into my mind) to increase the amount of peace, liberty and justice in the political affairs of the world, and should that expectation be unfulfilled it would be the failure of one of the most cherished dreams of the Labour Party.

II

SHOULD BRITAIN LEAVE THE
EUROPEAN CONTINENT TO TAKE
CARE OF ITSELF?

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II

SHOULD BRITAIN LEAVE THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT TO TAKE CARE OF ITSELF ?

The second of the questions addressed to me is contained in the title of this article and is one which has to be answered in our own interests ; America is concerned in the reply only in so far as it may influence its own policy.

There is much to be said for British isolation, and in a general and abstract way I subscribe heartily to the doctrine that the less we are involved in Continental policy the better. An abstract answer is not, however, a complete answer. It is at best only the laying

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down of a position from which to begin an enquiry into how far the necessities of the case compel us to modify it, adjust it, or devise an evolving transition policy which will in time work out to what is completely desirable.

Whilst nations are foolish enough to trust to armaments for their defence, they must remain in a constant state of danger, because there being no difference between the weapons of offence and defence, the state equipped for defence is equally equipped for offence. So, security can never be found in that way. Thus, even if we decided to be blind to Continental policies and politics, we could not be indifferent to Continental armaments, and through that gateway we should be driven, whether we wished it or not, into Continental alliances. Much has been written and said in condemnation of the policy of a Balance of Power, and, if peace be its object, it deserves

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every sneer and anathema that has been thrown at it. But it is the only possible result of a trust in military defence.

Whatever may be said about the matter from the point of view of rigid reason, I am quite sure that no responsible statesman will ever persuade the people of this country to disarm in a world armed to the teeth. Their capacity to be afraid will prevent that. So long as the world is armed, the simple traditional determining purposes of British military policy will remain active. We cannot feel safe if any one power should be able to dominate the Continent, and we shall therefore continue to be interested in a Balance of Power policy.

The development of the arm has confused somewhat the political strategy based upon a naval and land arm, but the nature of the strategy remains the same. It must be of the essence of a

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Balance of Power. If anyone ever really imagined that the crushing of one menace by the war and the emergence of Allies was to change our Continental policy, events since the armistice must have undeceived such romantic optimism.

But something else was to be satisfied by whatever attitude we adopt to Continental states. Can we now draw away and adopt the attitude of isolation? We are responsible as a partner for the present state of Europe. The expectation that after victory, we could march away leaving anything to happen, must surely be impossible to the great mass of decent thinking and feeling British people. Nor should this moral obligation be obscured by the frightful blunders of our Governments who have brought us into such messes that the impatient groan "Get out of them," is very natural. We ought to change our policy, but not by throwing off our obligations.

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Therefore, we cannot leave the European Continent to look after itself. It will not only look after itself ; it will also look after us. We are under obligations to help to set it on its feet again. Above all, the development of the relations between nations—human, economic, political, is daily strengthening the feelings of neighbourliness and of co-operation.

But let there be no mistake about this. The policy of a Labour Government would proceed on lines very different from those hitherto pursued in search of national security and confidence. We are as far removed from the Imperialism of Disraeli and the land and concession grabbers as from the antiquated negativism of the pure doctrine of Cobdenism. For us, there is no question as to whether we are to take a part in Continental politics, but how are we to devise the best way of carrying on our obvious duties and interests ?

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I consider that every other question of foreign policy is obscured, or is only of temporary importance, when considered in relation to national security and reconstruction. We have to abandon absolutely every vestige of trust in military equipment, and with that end in view we have to devise ways by which we can go through a transition time, when we may have to maintain a pure defence force relatively adequate, whilst we work sleeplessly to place national security on a totally different foundation. These problems of transformation are the hardest of all problems to explain to mere propagandists or to people who see nothing but black on one side and white on the other. The organic change from one system to another through a time when the old is mingled with the new, when the flow of the new is steadily increased until the old has gone, is, however, the kind of work which leaders

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of opinion must be prepared to do far more frequently than ever before.

We must find in the League of Nations the focus of our contacts with Europe. We must have no sectional alliances. We must give no guarantees of a special kind ; we must regard the League no longer as an Executive Committee of the victors with other nations invited to look on and give an appearance of respectable authority to what the victors (and not always all those) decide. But until the League has obtained the confidence of all the important nations, we must not become the mere catspaws of the League's devotees, and do nothing except through the League. As British interests cannot be dissociated from Continental conditions, so Continental interests cannot be dissociated from World conditions. America had the very best reasons for declining to enter the League, and where American co-opera-

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tion is obtainable the League (particularly as it now is) should not be allowed to stand in its way.

We ought not to shrink from our responsibility to Germany though that word and idea may seem repulsive. Surely every recent event has shown that the victor has responsibilities to a late enemy. We have to see that the German people are not crushed, not enslaved, not turned into pariahs, because such things are wrong and are to be a danger to Europe. This involves both a political and an economic policy. In addition, we shall have to keep our eye upon the small states created by the war. They too raise both political (or racial) and economic problems which we cannot afford to overlook, and which, if we show no sympathetic interest in them, may be settled to our detriment.

Everything depends upon how we show

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our legitimate interest. If in the old way by alliance, by agreements arranged by secret diplomacy, by the formation of rival groups, then war will follow war, and we had better adopt the principles of isolation and make the best of them. We should then withdraw at once from the Cologne sector ; we should write no more notes urging a new method of conduct upon France and Belgium ; we should confess that we have no further contribution to make either to Europe's rescue or to Europe's destruction ; from within our own borders we should survey our military position and our economic possibilities, fall back upon an exclusive Empire—and allow the slow footed years to bring us our doom. For, let there be no mistake about it, that is surrender ; that is to give up initiative and to let the tides heaving in the world carry us whither they will.

On the other hand, we can keep the

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initiative in creating a better political and financial order in Europe by patiently building up Councils and Courts that would be more judicial than legislative ; that, under the inspiration of an ever widening fellowship of nations with whom we could act, would face problem after problem—minorities, race, industry, liberty, finance ; that would afford general guarantees of safety and establish that calm and confident mind which must precede, or at any rate accompany, any general scheme of disarmament. Thus we could remove, not in a day truly, but by the working out of consciously planned and pursued policies, the terrible menace of future strife which the war and the enforced peace have left as their most substantial gift to this and the next generation.

We need a British policy in accord with new conditions. Even if we give a paper reply of " yes " to the question I have

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been answering, it would only be a refusal to face facts which sooner or later would challenge us after they had become more dangerous than they now are.

III

BRITISH LABOUR AND INTER- NATIONAL CREDIT AND TRADE, WITH SOME THOUGHTS UPON INTERNATIONAL LOANS

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III

BRITISH LABOUR AND INTERNATIONAL CREDIT AND TRADE, WITH SOME THOUGHTS UPON INTERNATIONAL LOANS

The third question put to me relates to International trade and finance. This question appears in the speeches of our critics as though it was bound by its very nature to prove a rock upon which a Labour Government was doomed to come to wreck. Our critics, however, have much to learn before they can even state our case, to say nothing of replying to it. Russia, proceeding by the way of revolution and thereby raising maximum

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difficulties, has shown that with time the organisation of Arcos could be adapted successfully to carry on trade for commercial purposes. But a better guide to how International trade could be organised is afforded by our own Co-operative movement with its great ramifications of foreign trade.

The assumption, however, that foreign trade and its system of international credits can be carried on only by methods which cannot vary much from existing ones must seem absolutely absurd to anyone who studies the question with a detached and critical mind. Whatever may be the measure of success of existing methods, they are wasteful for production, uncertain in results, always liable to be upset by corners, panics and such like, too frequently dislocated by planned manipulations. The transactions are conducted, however, by a delicate mechanism easily put out of gear and

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controlled by a handful of powerful people, and a Labour Government would never think of a mere wanton interference which, however good its paper justification might be, would lead to unnecessary trouble. In spite of what is said to the contrary there is no special difficulty in conducting foreign trade under conditions which would yield far greater benefits to the whole world of producers and consumers than the present system of unregulated and, from the point of view of the whole community, unorganised enterprise.

Credits are made by trade—honest trade, and we cannot afford (less to-day than ever before) that the financial system of the world should be the master instead of the servant of industry. Whether it be purely individualistic private enterprise using economic power primarily in its own interests, or organised industrial groups, that are to keep the trade of

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the world moving, we cannot forget that the simple purpose of it all is the exchange as expeditiously, regularly and cheaply as possible, of the products of one field or factory for those of another, and credit systems and tariffs should serve that end in singleness of purpose.

Therefore, governments should rigidly refrain from playing tricks with the mechanism of trade, either as regards currency, or debts, or any such thing. It is always simpler and more economical in the end to honour and to pay than to forfeit and repudiate. If changes are made in the system, they should not destroy it as a going concern, but should strengthen and amplify those going parts of it, *e.g.* co-operation—which contain in themselves the promises and securities required. That is the only sure way of social evolution.

A British Labour Government would found itself on the principles of Free

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Trade, and would look generally to International agreement for the distribution of material like tropical products and oil. Our Labour Party has never abandoned the hope that a department of the League of Nations might be set up to facilitate such agreements. We have published a considerable amount of literature showing how the tropics could be developed without destroying their native populations. The next generation cannot leave the tropics to crude nature, but, unless their care is under the control of Labour Governments, their development is to be the signal for a scramble and an exploitation in relation to which the worst days of the Belgian Congo will appear to be human.

The greatest obstacle to the carrying on of a Free Trade policy in the immediate future will be the liberal creation of political dams across the economic streams of Europe owing to the setting

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up of new nations, each of which began with excessive national zeal to overdo its sovereign powers. That will pass, and as not a few of those new states are likely to be brought under labour influences, we may find them before long joining Economic federations—widely extended. Free Trade areas like the American Union—much to their own and to other nations' benefit. The Labour and Socialist International has always urged this policy upon them.

There will still remain the problem of currencies far more depreciated on the international than on the home market. So long as the mark, say, exchanges for X in London, but purchases X + Y in Berlin, the British producer will be handicapped both at home and abroad by German exports. And the countries whose currency is depreciated in this way are at the same time being crushed into a state of industrial servility. Thus

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they become unfair and dangerous competitors against whom countries producing on higher economic levels can only too easily be persuaded that they must protect themselves by tariffs. A Labour Government, knowing full well that a policy of protection in this country will only lead to its impoverishment and be a factor in future wars, will have to busy itself to meet the difficulty in other ways. The only sound way is to restore to the depreciated currency an international value equivalent to its domestic one. What that is in relation to the currency of other countries does not matter very much, provided it is stable.

The method of International loan with the necessary guarantee of Budget balancing, is that which the Labour Party favours most. The use to which the loans are to be put would be carefully scrutinised. Whilst France is getting a financial grip upon the new States by

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lending them money to be spent on armaments, not a halfpenny for that purpose would be given or guaranteed by a Labour Government. Nor would she guarantee or help in a loan floated as the recent Austrian loan was to the excessive advantage of financiers. Such loans should be strictly for purposes of national recovery, and in their terms would show generosity limited only by protection against loss and by just business arrangements.

At the same time, we know perfectly well that these loans can only reach very modest figures. They cannot come like manna from heaven ; they ought not to be drawn from capital required for our own needs ; they can be found only from free balances. Mr. Keynes recently added to the several services he has done us, by trying to keep our notions fixed upon possibility when he reminded us

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that throughout the many years we have been investing capital in India, the total is still under £200,000,000, and that in the rest of the Empire we have not sunk more than £500,000,000. "The aggregate of the loans outstanding from the British investor to the Governments of the whole British Empire and to the Counties and Corporations of the United Kingdom does not reach £1,000,000,000." He says further: "A very small half-charitable loan, on the lines projected for Austria, designed to help Germany on to her legs again, is surely the utmost to be expected in the near future." I quote from Mr. Keynes, but he has expressed in precise terms what the Labour Party has been advocating since it has become plain that something will have to be done to aid Central Europe to gain its balance.

Comparatively modest though the loan

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may be in terms of our currency, its effect if properly used would be considerable for rescuing purposes. I was told on very good authority, for instance, that at the beginning of August a credit of £1,000,000 to enable Germany to import food and coal, might have meant the difference between the complete collapse of the Mark and its restrained depreciation. Be that as it may, credit will be required to stabilise currency and to balance Budgets, and their indirect effects will be greater than their direct ones if they are properly used and are made the occasion for proper control. In any event, we should get the financial experts—including those of America and the neutral countries—together again and take their advice. Upon the creation of conditions which will permit Free Trade to operate depends the peace and prosperity of Europe. Each nation

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must devise its own policy of internal economic government, but the nearer it approaches the Socialist view of communal interests controlling international trade, the closer will it approach to stability in its standards of life.

IV

A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS RUSSIA

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IV

A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS RUSSIA

The fourth and last question addressed to me is: What attitude a Labour Government would take to Russia? and the question is put, I assume, because it is well understood that the Bolshevist policy is not ours and that we disagree fundamentally with Bolshevist methods and yet are in favour of the diplomatic recognition of Moscow.

The problems are associated with this question—the political problem of diplomatic relations and the economic problem of trade.

As regards the former, a Labour Government would recognise the Russian Government without delay. This has been mixed up with bitter political and social prejudice. It is true that the Russian revolution has been marked by a

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ruthless dictatorship, by cruel repression, and by bloody events. And yet I cannot attribute to that the real reason for the hostility of other Governments. Had there been a revolution of White Monarchists, it would have been just as tyrannical and quite as bloody, but in that case forgiveness would have been easy and recognition would not have been withheld. Let us be frank about this. It was the class that conducted the revolution, the class victimised by it, and the aims of the revolution that determined the attitude of other governments, and neither the methods nor the events. During revolutions like those of France and Russia, when the reaction against the old established system is bound in the nature of things to be cruel and frenzied, foreign representatives have to be withdrawn, but, so soon as the revolution is over, both wisdom and interest demand the resumption of responsible and normal

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relations. The community of states cannot decree that any important state shall be outlaw or pariah except at grave risk and heavy cost.

When the refusal to recognise a people diplomatically carries with it a refusal to trade with them, the folly is all the more expensive, and in the end punishes those who would inflict chastisement more than the people chastised.

The Russian Government, following abstract book theories and dogmas forfeited and repudiated absolutely and on principle, with the result that the investments and property of individual foreign nationals became national concerns. Now, a Government either has to make itself responsible for trade (as the Russian Government has done), or it has to allow its nationals to trade at their own risks. If our Government policy had not been dictated by personal interests using illegitimate political influence, there are

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plenty of traders who would have been in Russian trade long ago, and we should not have waited till August 1923 for the departure of a responsible body of traders to Moscow to make their own arrangements. The policy of our Government which was a mixture of conflicting motives and thoroughly unsound political principles, had some emotional and short sighted support, but it was foredoomed to failure and has been very damaging to our interests.

A Labour Government would take immediate steps to begin trade with Russia by direct consultation with Moscow and by granting what aids are legitimate, including guarantees under the financial scheme for encouraging exports. That policy instead of retarding would have hastened agreements regarding forfeited property.

The recognition of the Russian Government by a Labour Administration would

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have in no way meant that our Labour movement agreed with that Government. Diplomatic relations are in no sense a partnership ; they are nothing more than a channel for official communications, and whether we consider the Far or the Near East, or the many other points where Russia crosses our orbit, or the matters in dispute between us, diplomatic relations established as soon as possible were surely a necessity. The equivocal position of M. Krassin was nothing but sheer humbug. Both honesty and common-sense should have ended it long ago.

The Russian Government, however, made it easy for its enemies to maintain the above unsatisfactory relationship. It did harbour for a long time a belief in a world revolution on Bolshevik lines ; it spent money in foreign countries—our own included—promoting such a revolution ; it used diplomatic privileges

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to carry on conspiracy and propaganda ; it claimed for its agents, in countries like Georgia, immunity from arrest and at the same time the right to overthrow the government to which they were accredited. I do not refer to the troubles which they did their best to bring upon us at times when we were in conspiracies against them. We have no right to complain about that. Nor do I refer to the scores of false charges brought against Moscow. I have in mind only things of which I have personal knowledge, things done, not in reply to any hostility shown, but as the result of the animating idea of youthful Bolshevism that it owed no obligation to any non-Communist State, that it was bound by no rules of the game, but that it could use its will and its wits without scruple and solely to suit its own purposes.

Moscow has seen the folly of the world revolution ; it has been able to measure

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the calibre of its erstwhile trusted agents. But whilst its Third International lasts, and whilst Europe is kept on the rack by the stupidity of some national leaders, we shall not be free from danger. Starvation, industrial paralysis and bankruptcy do not nourish constitutionalism and "law and order," and even now the queer non-moral mentality of the Communist means that he is an ever ready tool for the purposes of Moscow.

The very worst defence against this, however, is the boycott of the Moscow Government, the wild whirl of forgery, of ignorance, of fake which has been nine-tenths of the anti-Bolshevist propaganda in both Great Britain and America. The firm and well informed opposition of the Second International, between 1919 and 1922, inspired mainly by the Labour and Socialist movements of Great Britain, Belgium, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, bore the

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brunt of the fight against Bolshevism in its young vigorous days, and it is only by a continuation of the same policy that the noxious weed is to be cleared out.

The Moscow Government has taken root ; it has gone far away from its first hopes and policies ; Russia is part of the European group, and, neither politically nor economically, can be cut off from it ; it has enormous reserves of power and can upset treaties and working arrangements to which it has not assented. The victors in the late war have all been too vain, too self-centred, too absorbed in their victory to make a real peace, and Russia is the power that can in time upset us. Nobody but a madman can contemplate without horror a combination of revengeful German economic power and hostile Russian material and human resources against the rest of Europe.

So the Labour Party with its sense of

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reality would face the facts and accept the existence of the Moscow Government as it would accept the existence of any other government. It would stand no nonsense and no monkey tricks from Russian diplomatic representatives. They would have to come here with all the privileges and all the obligations of diplomatists. They would be protected against such attacks as have been made upon M. Rakovsky, but they themselves would have to observe the most scrupulously correct behaviour. It has been a growing custom to create propaganda departments in embassies. I have recently had a bundle of literature attacking our Government, with all the marks of a foreign government's embassy upon it ; and similar things, I am told, are being done in America. That breach of diplomatic rectitude should be stopped and neither Russia nor any other power allowed to pursue it.

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The war has left us all too emotional ; too confident that will and force can perform miracles—especially the miracle of giving us both peace and security ; too blind to historical experience and to the natural laws that govern political and economic transactions. We need to return to calm common-sense policies that take the world as it is and tackle its problems objectively. One of the greatest tests as to whether we are returning to those wiser frames of mind and modes of action is our policy towards Russia.

